Act 18
Intermission, and the Third Match

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I HAVE LOST, NARUMI.
AS PROMISED, I SHALL TRUST THAT YOU ARE IN THE RIGHT.
HOLD ON A SECOND, TIMBA-VATI.
YOU DELIBE-RATELY HELD BACK AT THE LAST MOMENT ...

KEH! I COULDN'T BE PROUD OF BEATING SOMEONE WHO'S ALREADY WORN OUT!
.....
I NEVER HOLD BACK MY HAND IN A BATTLE BETWEEN MEN.
DAHL, WE ARE FINISHED. YOU MAY CHALLENGE HIM NEXT IF YOU WISH.

TIMBAVATI MAY HAVE BEEN CONVINCED BY THAT FARCE, BUT NOT ME!

YOU'VE SURE GOT A KNACK FOR WINNING PEOPLE OVER WITH YOUR WORDS. YOU PISS ME OFF!
HEY, YOU. THE ASSHOLE FROM JAPAN.

3

JUST REMEMBER ONE THING.
SHUT UP!
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FINE BY ME.
YOU WANNA SLUG IT OUT?

I DON'T LIKE YOU.
HEY, WAIT-RESS!
ONE IRISH WHIS-KEY.
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YOU'VE BEEN WOR-KING HARD, NARU-MI.
I'LL BET YOU'D LIKE TO RELAX FOR A WHILE.
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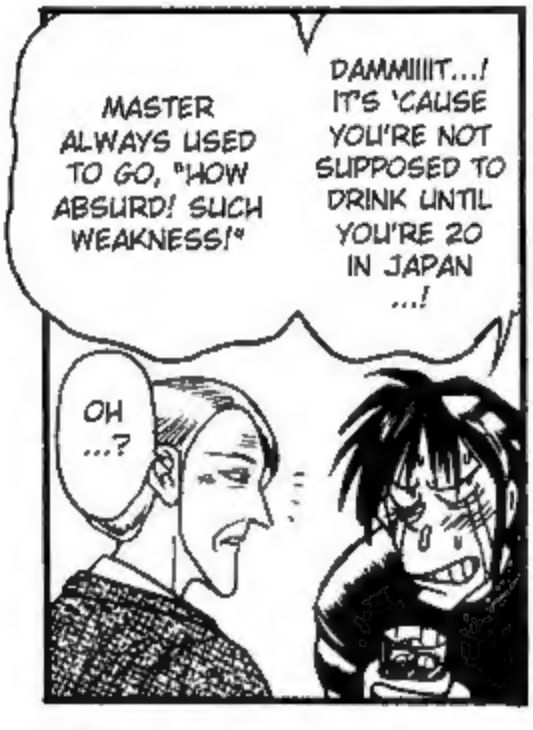
YEAH ...
I'LL HAVE A SCO-TCH.
HOW ABOUT YOU?
I'M FINE WITH WHAT-EVER.
MAKE IT TWO, THEN.
VERY WELL.
STILL... YOU ARE A MYSTERIOUS ONE, AREN'T YOU?

GAGH
I SUPPOSE WE MIGHT EXPECT AS MUCH FROM THE "LAST SHIROGANE" BROUGHT TO US BY GUY AND MADAME LUCILLE...
YOU EXPRESS YOUR ANGER OPENLY, AND THE INTENSITY OF YOUR EMOTION IS UNUSUAL FOR A SHIROGANE, MORE SO EVEN THAN DAHL'S.
WITH YOUR SKILL IN THE MARTIAL ARTS, YOU WERE ABLE TO DEFEAT DOLLS FOR WHICH EVEN THE SHIROGANE-O PROVED NO MATCH.

YOU DON'T HANDLE ALCOHOL WELL, DO YOU?
WHAT?! NO WAY, LOVE THE STUFF!
Bottoms up!

GHA GKHH HGHA KHF

5


DAMMIIIIT...! IT'S 'CAUSE YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO DRINK UNTIL YOU'RE 20 IN JAPAN ...!
MASTER ALWAYS USED TO GO, "HOW ABSURD! SUCH WEAKNESS!"
OH ...?

ONE ORANGE JUICE, PLEASE.
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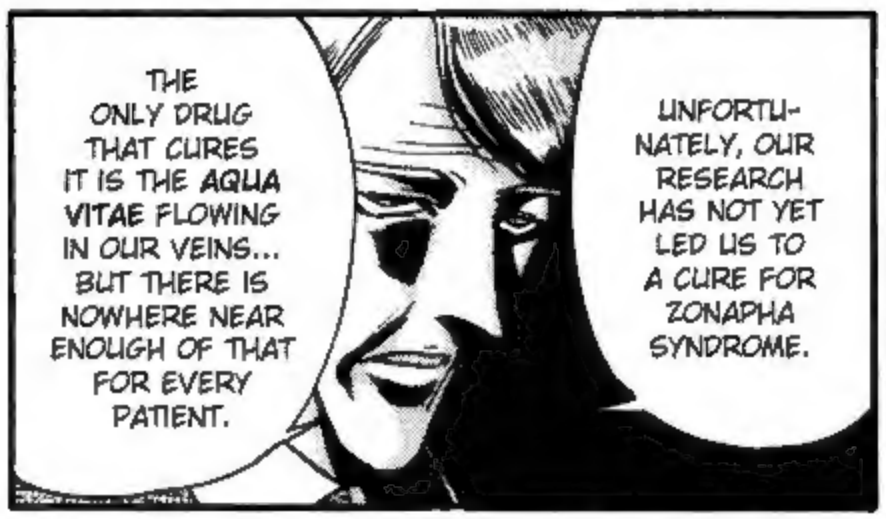
LOOOM
WHOOSH

HUH? WELL, HOW OLD DO I LOOK, THEN?
WHAT?! YOU'RE ONLY 19 YEARS OLD?
UHHH, 18... NO, SEPTEMBER WAS A WHILE AGO, SO...
19, I GUESS ...
UNTIL YOU'RE 20? WAIT A MOMENT. HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW?
BUT I UNDER-STAND NOW ...
SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT YOU SEEM VERY MATURE.
I WOULD HAVE SAID... 28 OR SO...
Tw... Twenty... eight...
THE REASON YOU'VE DEVOTED YOUR LIFE TO THEM...
THE REASON YOU'RE SO FIXATED ON THOSE CHILDREN ...
BUT, YES... SINCE I'M A DOCTOR, I'VE PROBABLY SEEN MORE DEATH THAN MOST SHIROGANE.
JUST STEVE IS FINE, NARU-MI.
NO... I'M SURE THAT APPLIES MORE TO YOU THAN TO ME, MR. ROCKEN-FIELD.
DESPITE YOUR YOUTH, YOU MUST HAVE SEEN A GREAT MANY PAINFUL DEATHS.

IF YOU'RE A DOCTOR WITH THE LIFESPAN OF A SHIROGANE, YOU MUST HAVE COME UP WITH SOME WAY TO TREAT ZONAPHA SYNDROME, RIGHT?!
EVEN OUTSIDE OF YOU, MEDICINE IN GENERAL IS ALWAYS ADVANCING, ISN'T IT ?!
I... WENT TO GO SEE THOSE KIDS WHO ARE LIVING WITH ZONAPHA SYNDROME ...


UNFORTU-NATELY, OUR RESEARCH HAS NOT YET LED US TO A CURE FOR ZONAPHA SYNDROME.
THE ONLY DRUG THAT CURES IT IS THE AQUA VITAE FLOWING IN OUR VEINS... BUT THERE IS NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH OF THAT FOR EVERY PATIENT.

IT'S TOO MUCH TO BEAR!
WE SHIROGANE GO ON LIVING, EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE CHILDREN DYING RIGHT NOW...!
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SHIT!
... CHILD-REN, EH ...?

A PHOTO ...?

THE BOYS ARE FROM MY WIFE'S FIRST HUSBAND, THOUGH.
THAT IS MY BELOVED FAMILY.
I LEFT THEM BACK IN ENGLAND.
THANK YOU.
... CUTE KIDS.
TO LIVE WITH OTHERS, AND STAY A PART OF SOCIETY AS MUCH AS WE CAN.
THERE ARE THOSE OF US WHO TRY TO BEGIN NEW LIVES DESPITE BEING SHIROGANE.
HA HA HA! YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW ANY SHIROGANE BESIDES GUY AND MADAME LUCILLE, DO YOU?
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT ...
IT'S DIFFICULT FOR PEOPLE TO LIVE SEPARATED FROM OTHERS, WITH NO REAL CONNECTIONS OR BONDS.
THOUGH WE SHIROGANE MAY NOW BE IMMORTAL BEINGS, WE WERE ORIGINALLY HUMANS.
...MADAME LUCILLE DOES NOT APPROVE OF THE PRACTICE MUCH, BUT...
8
AHAHA! WHEN IS IT?
NO, YOUR MAJESTY!
NO, HE PLAYS AN ORDINARY SOLDIER. HIS ONLY LINE IS ...
OH, REALLY? IS HE GONNA BE THE LEAD?
RICHIE, MY YOUNGER SON, IS GOING TO BE IN A SCHOOL PLAY SOON.

YES ...
THAT'S TRUE ....

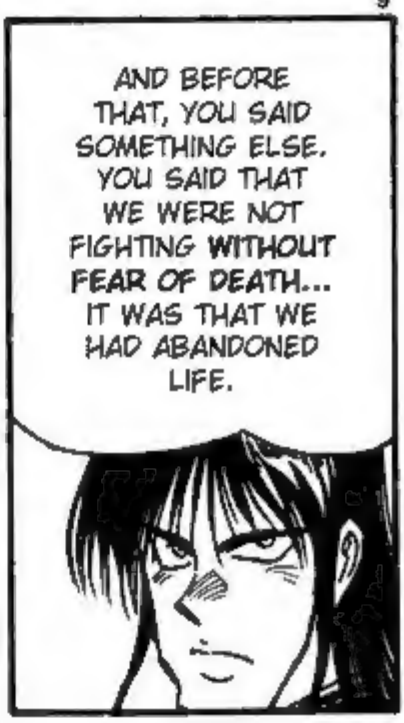
IT'S NEXT WEEK.
AS HIS FATHER, I WANT TO GO SEE IT.
THIS FIGHT'LL PROBABLY TAKE MORE THAN A DAY ...
YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO GO.

YOU SAID A LITTLE WHILE AGO ...
THAT WE SHIROGANE ARE WASTING OUR LIVES, THROWING THEM AWAY ...

I LIKE YOU, NARUMI. YOU'RE A VERY GOOD MAN.
SO THERE IS JUST ONE MISUNDERSTANDING I WOULD LIKE TO CLEAR UP.

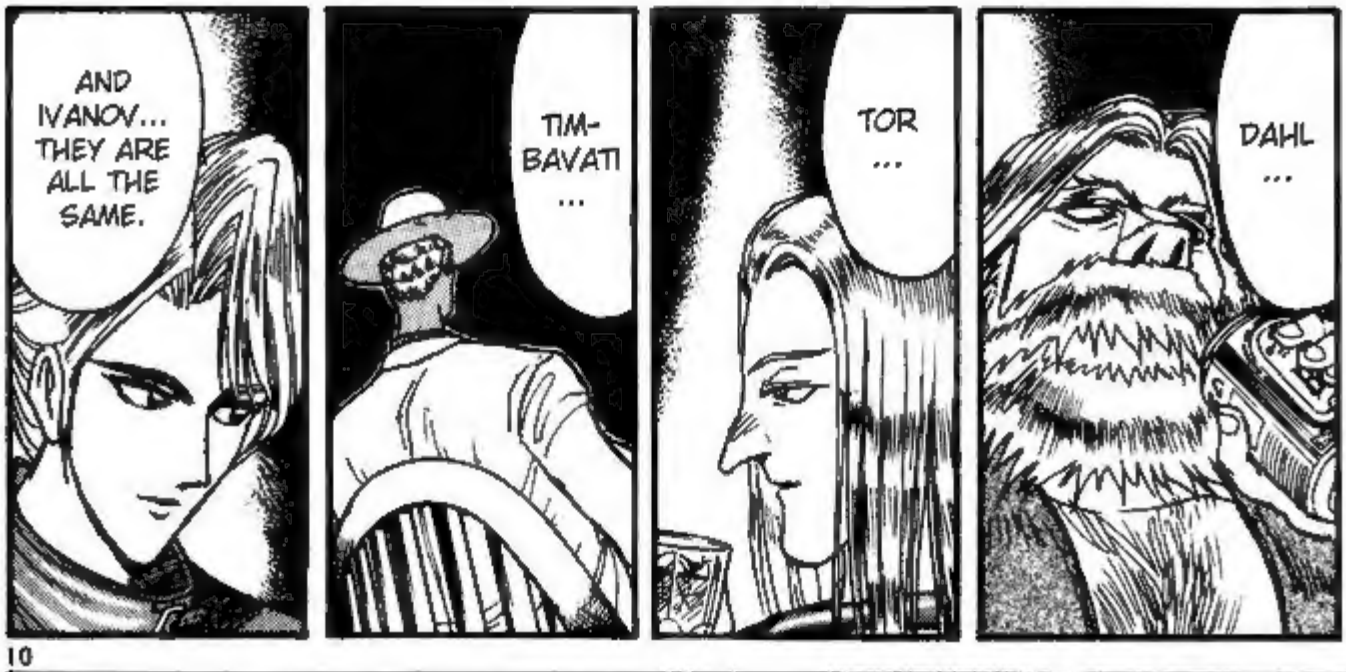
THAT'S RIGHT. I CAME HERE FOR MY FAMILY.
I CAME TO DEFEAT THE DOLLS WHO ARE TRYING TO SPREAD ZONAPHA SYNDROME TO EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD.

YEAH ... I DID.
BUT... I WOULD LIKE YOU TO LOOK AT ME. DO YOU THINK I AM HERE TO THROW MY LIFE AWAY?
NO, I...


AND BEFORE THAT, YOU SAID SOMETHING ELSE. YOU SAID THAT WE WERE NOT FIGHTING WITHOUT FEAR OF DEATH... IT WAS THAT WE HAD ABANDONED LIFE.

I WANT YOU TO UNDER-STAND THIS, NARUMI.
SHIRO-GANE ARE NOT DEAD PEOPLE WHO HAVE ABANDONED LIFE.

I HAVE PREPARED MYSELF FOR WHAT-EVER MAY COME.
BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION OF DYING.


AND IVANOV... THEY ARE ALL THE SAME.
TIM-BAVATI ...
TOR ...
DAHL ...

AND SEE THE AUTOMATA DESTROYED DOWN TO THE LAST OF THEIR RANKS.
HOPE TO SURVIVE THIS BATTLE ...
WE ALL, FOR OUR OWN VARIOUS REASONS ...

AND... ALSO...
WHEN THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE COURSES THROUGH OUR BLOOD ...
WE WHO HAVE BECOME UNDYING CLING TO IT, AS WE WOULD TO A WALKING STICK, BELIEVING THAT WE ARE STILL HUMAN.

.....
IS THAT SO ...?

I HAVE ALSO COME HERE ...
FOR CHILD-REN.

I WASN'T SURE I COULD GO ON FIGHTING THESE WIND-UP FREAKS IF I HAD TO BE CALLING MONSTERS LIKE YOU MY COMRADES...
I WAS THINKING THAT YOU SHIROGANE WERE MONSTERS ...
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT.

YES... I DO TRY TO BE...
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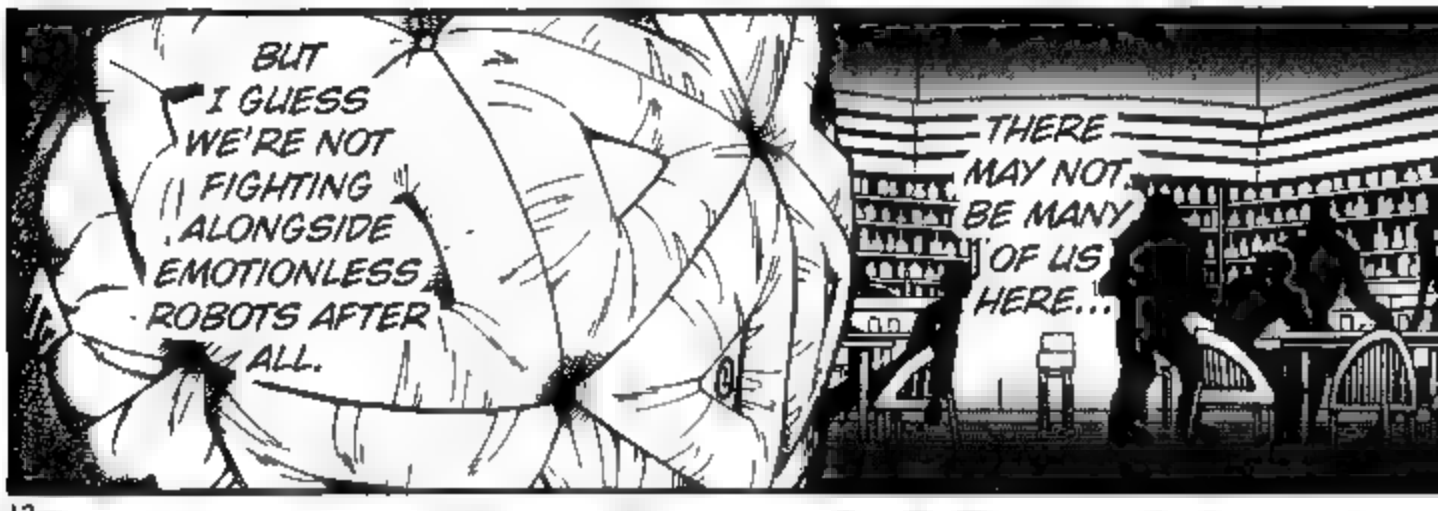
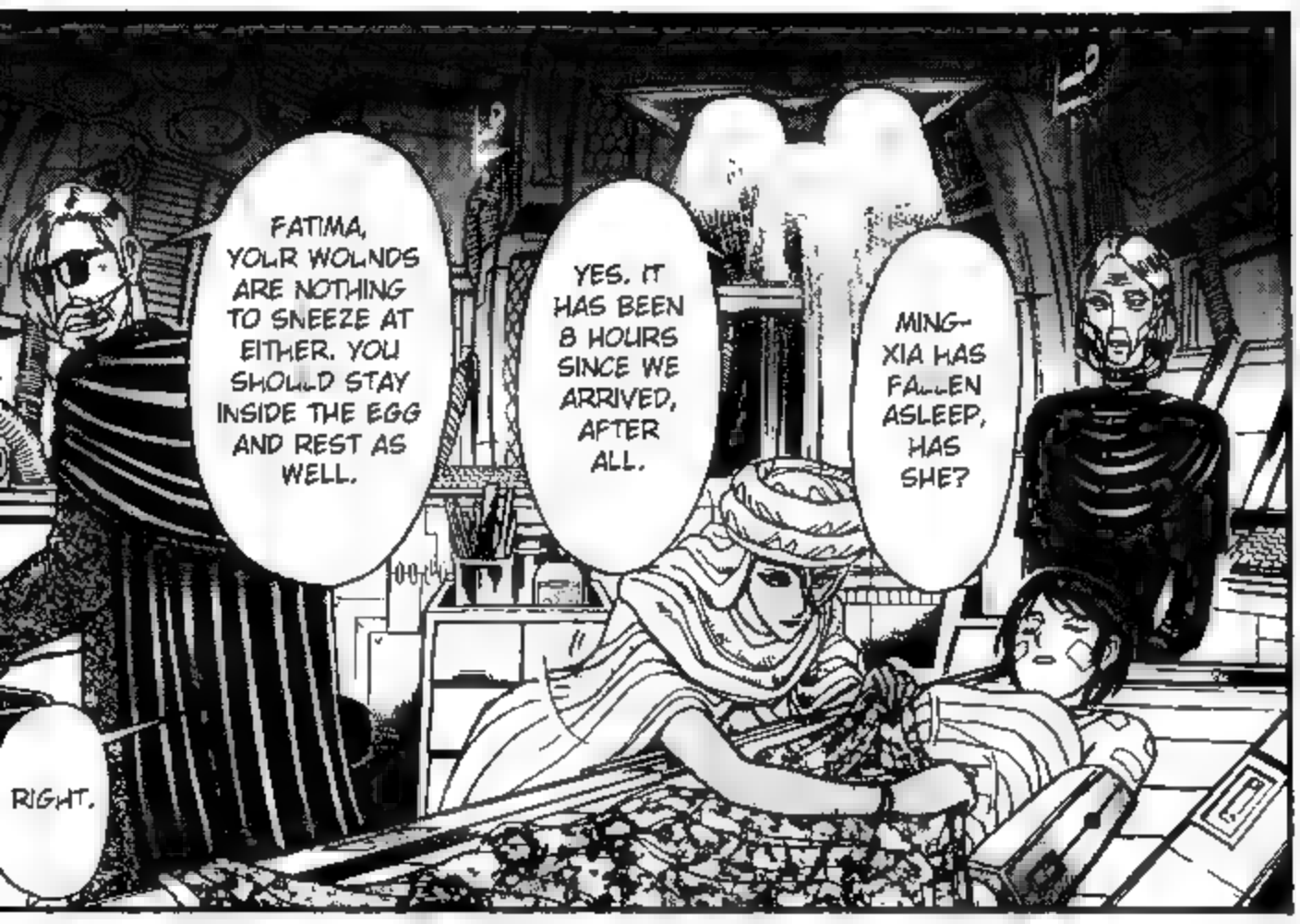
BUT I GUESS I WAS WRONG.
YOU'RE DEFINITELY HUMAN, STEVE.

OH, IF IT ISN'T THE PRIVATE PHYSICIAN WITH THE REPUTATION FOR BEING A LITTLE *TOO* NICE TO HIS FEMALE PATIENTS.
OH, REALLY NOW.
OH... TOR-SAN.
WHAT ARE YOU TWO TALKING ABOUT ALL BY YOUR-SELVES?
COME OVER AND JOIN THE REST OF US.

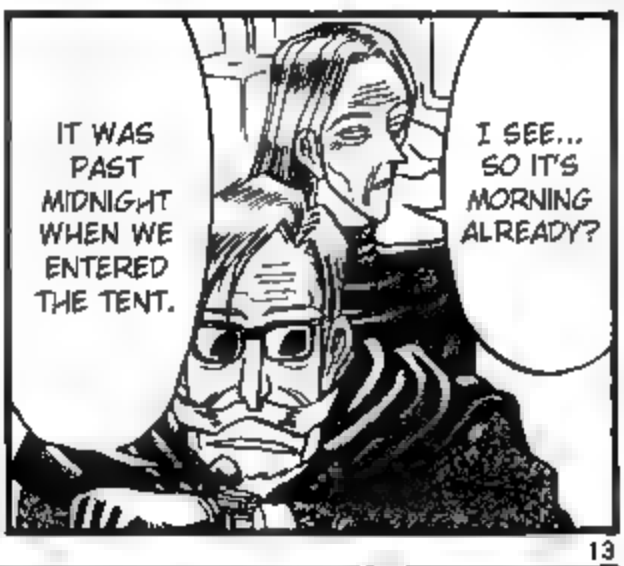
HEH HEH... DON'T WORRY, MING-XIA.
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO REVIVE THAT DEBATE ABOUT THE MANY BENEFITS OF SEX HORMONES IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES!
HEY, NOW!
I MAY HAVE THROWN AWAY ANY HOPE OF AN ORDINARY LIFE AS A SHIROGANE, BUT UNLIKE CERTAIN *OTHER* PARTIES, I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THE FACT THAT I'M BIOLOGICALLY MALE!


BUT I GUESS WE'RE NOT FIGHTING ALONGSIDE EMOTIONLESS ROBOTS AFTER ALL.
THERE MAY NOT BE MANY OF US HERE...

12


FATIMA, YOUR WOUNDS ARE NOTHING TO SNEEZE AT EITHER. YOU SHOULD STAY INSIDE THE EGG AND REST AS WELL.
YES. IT HAS BEEN 8 HOURS SINCE WE ARRIVED, AFTER ALL.
MING-XIA HAS FALLEN ASLEEP, HAS SHE?
RIGHT.

OUR PLAN IS TO KEEP THE DOLLS HERE UNTIL MIDNIGHT TONIGHT.
IF WE CAN MANAGE THAT, WE'LL HAVE QUITE THE SIGHT TO SHOW THEM.


IT WAS PAST MIDNIGHT WHEN WE ENTERED THE TENT.
I SEE... SO IT'S MORNING ALREADY?

13

THERE ARE STILL 15 SHIRO-GANE LEFT. IT SHOULD WORK OUT SOMEHOW.
I WONDER IF THIS GAME WILL LAST US UNTIL MIDNIGHT.

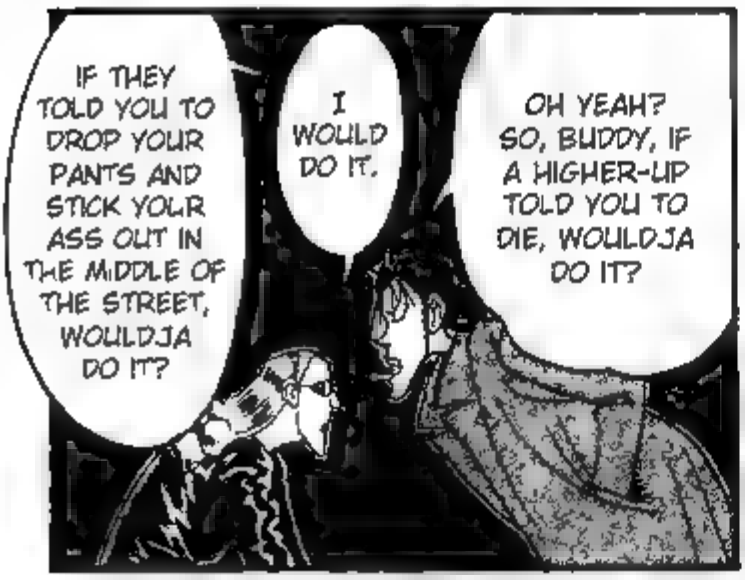
AND THOSE FOUR LITTLE PESTS WITH YOUR OWN HANDS, NO?
BUT, YOU KNOW, LUCILLE, I'M SURE THAT YOU'D LIKE TO DESTROY FRANCINE ...
HMPH ...

I'LL MAKE IT LAST, SOME-HOW OR ANOTHER.
EVEN IF BY CHANCE IT DOES NOT...

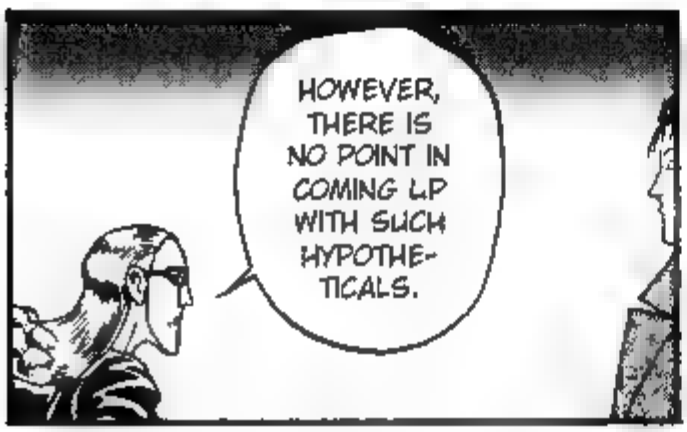
JUST SO LONG AS MY PUPPET IS DELIVERED HERE.

ASHIHANA, WE... OR RATHER, I... NEED ONLY CARRY OUT OR-DERS.
ONE THAT'S TOO BIG TO BE CARRIED IN ONE OF THE USUAL TRUNKS.
WE'RE TRANS-PORTIN' SOME KINDA MARIO-NETTE, RIGHT ?

SO... JUST WHAT'S IN THIS HUGE PACKAGE?


IF THEY TOLD YOU TO DROP YOUR PANTS AND STICK YOUR ASS OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET, WOULDJA DO IT?
I WOULD DO IT.
OH YEAH? SO, BUDDY, IF A HIGHER-UP TOLD YOU TO DIE, WOULDJA DO IT?

SHIROGANE-O ARE THE ULTIMATE SOLDIERS. THERE IS NO NEED FOR SOLDIERS TO ASK UNNECESSARY QUESTIONS.


HOWEVER, THERE IS NO POINT IN COMING UP WITH SUCH HYPOTHE-TICALS.

I WOULD DO IT.

15

YOU SEE! YOU HAVE NO ROOM TO TALK.
I GUESS THAT'S TRUE, BUT...
I'm not so good at that part...

HOW DO YOU JAPANESE YAKUZA DO THINGS, THEN? YOU OPERATE ACCORDING TO A SIMILIAR HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE, DO YOU NOT?
Sorry 'bout your life!
TCH! SO YOU'RE AN IDIOT, THEN, HUH?!

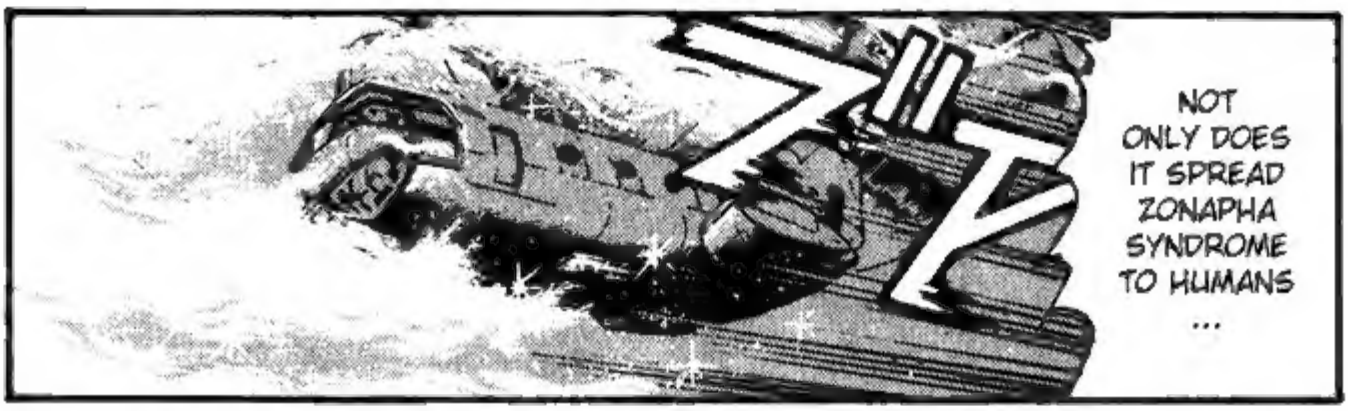
WHAT ARE YOU TALK-ING ABOUT ?!
OH, GEORGE-SAN! GOT A LITTLE PEEVED JUST NOW, DIDN'TCHA ?

HEE HEE, THERE'S YOUR HUMAN PART SHOWIN' THROUGH ...!
.....
I AM DONE SOCIA-LIZING WITH YOU!
AND YOU WERE HAPPY TO GET THE LAST WORD IN, WEREN'T-CHA?!
WHAT'S THE MATTER ?!
IT DIDN'T SHOW UP ON OUR RADAR!
H-HOLD ON! WHAT'S THAT?!
GOOD. PREPARE TO DE-SCEND.
GEORGE, WE'RE NEARING THE TARGET POINT.
THAT'S NO! ...
IT'S... A CLOUD... NO, A FOG ...!

SILVER SMOKE !!

SILVER SMOKE IS A CONGLOM-ERATION OF VERY TINY AUTOMATA!
WH-WH-AT'S GOIN' ON?!

I... I CAN'T! NOT EN-OUGH TIME!
AVOID IT!
SILVER SMOKE?! THAT'S WHAT *LE CIRQUE DE MINUIT* USES TO SPREAD ZONAPHA PATHOGENS ...!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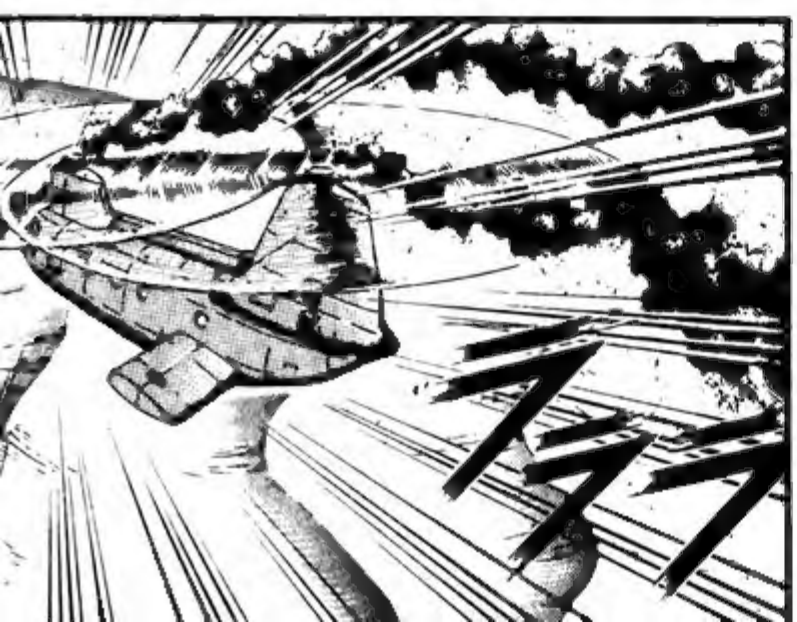
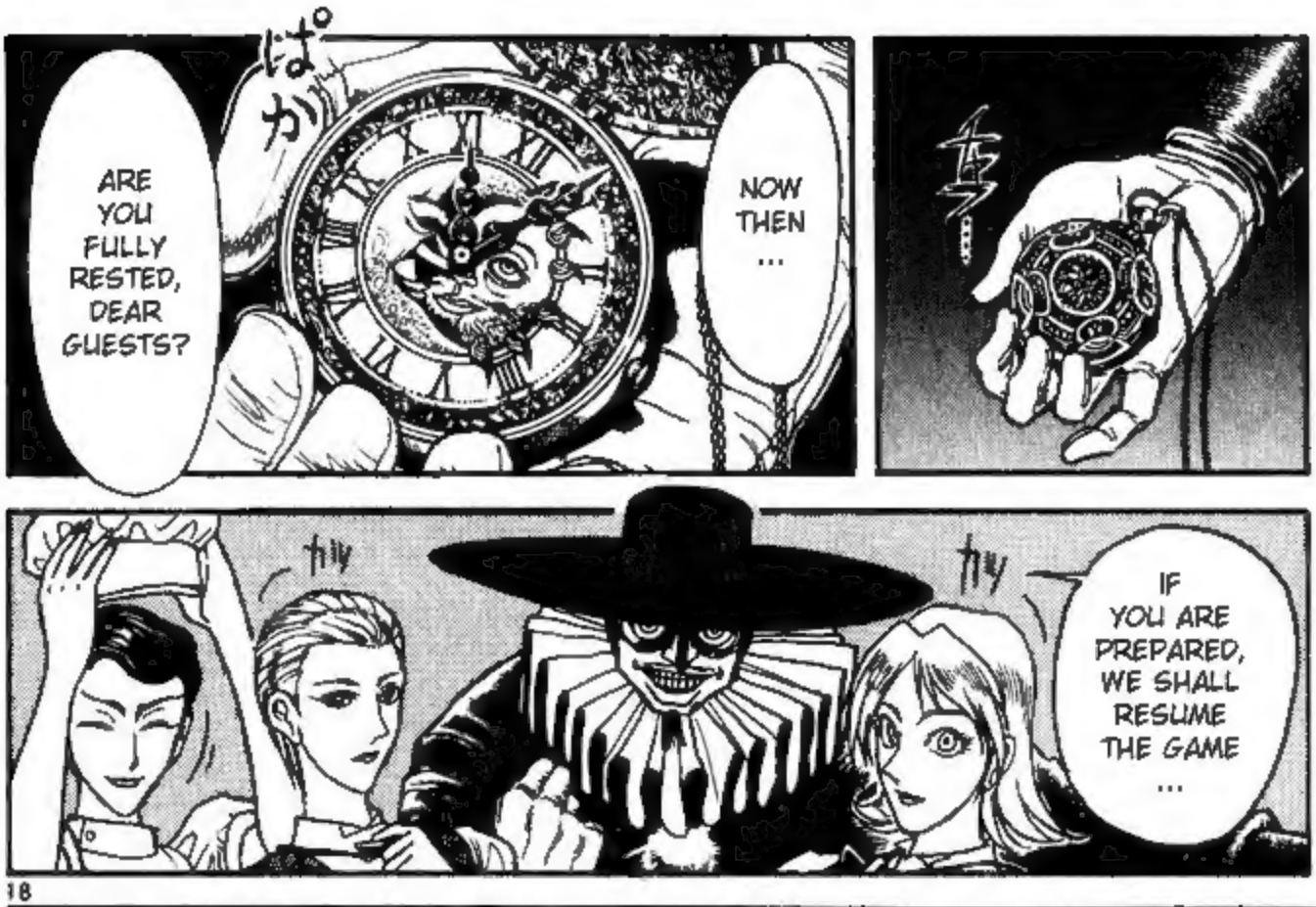
NOT ONLY DOES IT SPREAD ZONAPHA SYNDROME TO HUMANS ...

IT CAUSES MACHINERY TO MAL-FUNCTION AS WELL!



DAMN...! DID THEY DISSEMINATE THIS SMOKE AROUND THEIR TENT IN ADVANCE ...?!
WWAAH!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ARE YOU FULLY RESTED, DEAR GUESTS?
NOW THEN ...
IF YOU ARE PREPARED, WE SHALL RESUME THE GAME ...

AND LET THE THIRD MATCH BEGIN!

translation by funnuraba.tumblr.com

These scanlations have been uploaded *only* to Batoto so that I can remove them if the series is ever licensed. Please read them there instead of on websites that rip them and watermark them to make a profit off your views!

Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!

Any group with more experience or skill is welcome to take over at any time or to redo chapters I have already done if they are below the quality that this series deserves.